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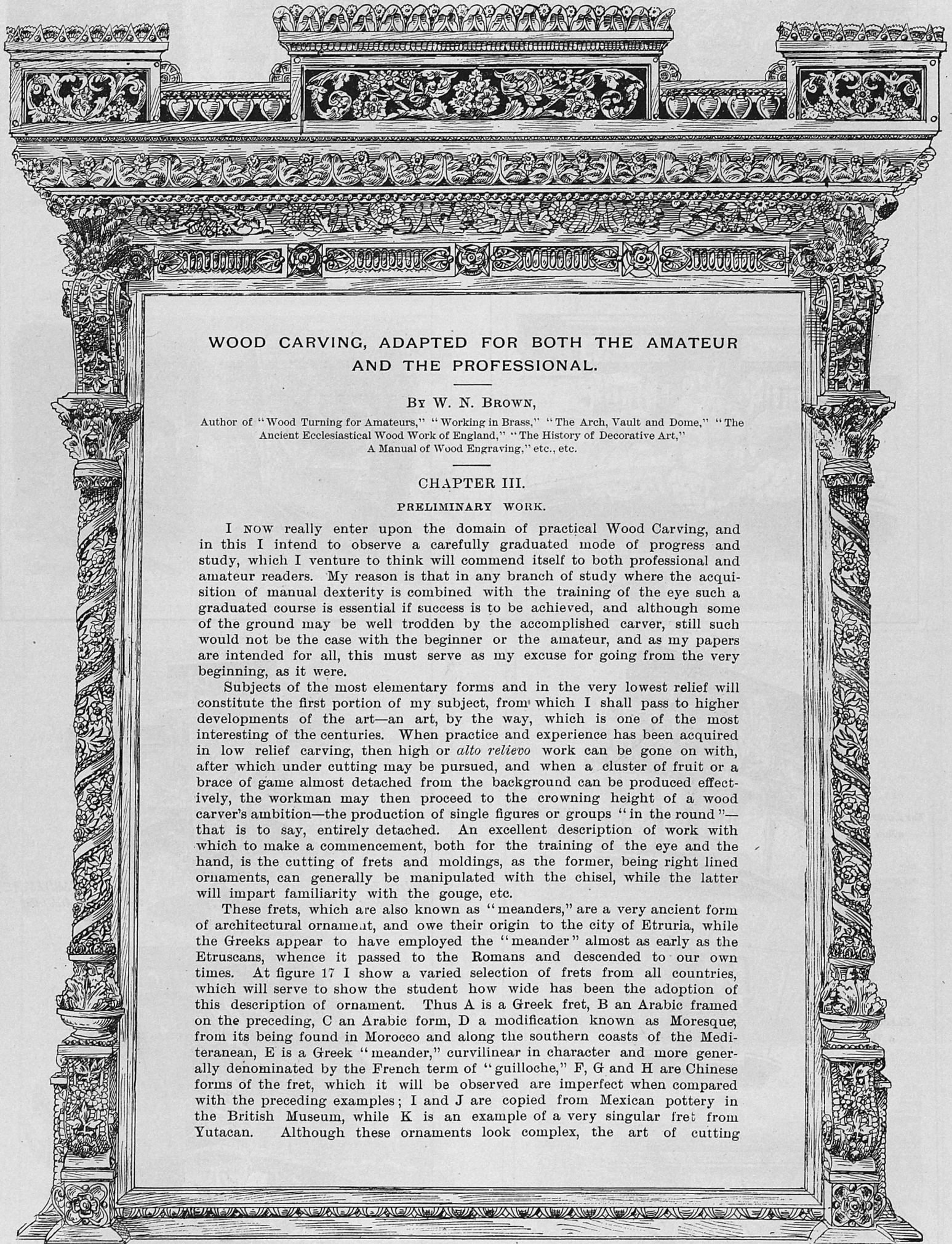
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WOOD CARVING, ADAPTED FOR BOTH THE AMATEUR  
AND THE PROFESSIONAL.

By W. N. BROWN,

Author of "Wood Turning for Amateurs," "Working in Brass," "The Arch, Vault and Dome," "The  
Ancient Ecclesiastical Wood Work of England," "The History of Decorative Art,"  
A Manual of Wood Engraving," etc., etc.

CHAPTER III.

PRELIMINARY WORK.

I NOW really enter upon the domain of practical Wood Carving, and in this I intend to observe a carefully graduated mode of progress and study, which I venture to think will commend itself to both professional and amateur readers. My reason is that in any branch of study where the acquisition of manual dexterity is combined with the training of the eye such a graduated course is essential if success is to be achieved, and although some of the ground may be well trodden by the accomplished carver, still such would not be the case with the beginner or the amateur, and as my papers are intended for all, this must serve as my excuse for going from the very beginning, as it were.

Subjects of the most elementary forms and in the very lowest relief will constitute the first portion of my subject, from which I shall pass to higher developments of the art—an art, by the way, which is one of the most interesting of the centuries. When practice and experience has been acquired in low relief carving, then high or *alto rilievo* work can be gone on with, after which under cutting may be pursued, and when a cluster of fruit or a brace of game almost detached from the background can be produced effectively, the workman may then proceed to the crowning height of a wood carver's ambition—the production of single figures or groups "in the round"—that is to say, entirely detached. An excellent description of work with which to make a commencement, both for the training of the eye and the hand, is the cutting of frets and moldings, as the former, being right lined ornaments, can generally be manipulated with the chisel, while the latter will impart familiarity with the gouge, etc.

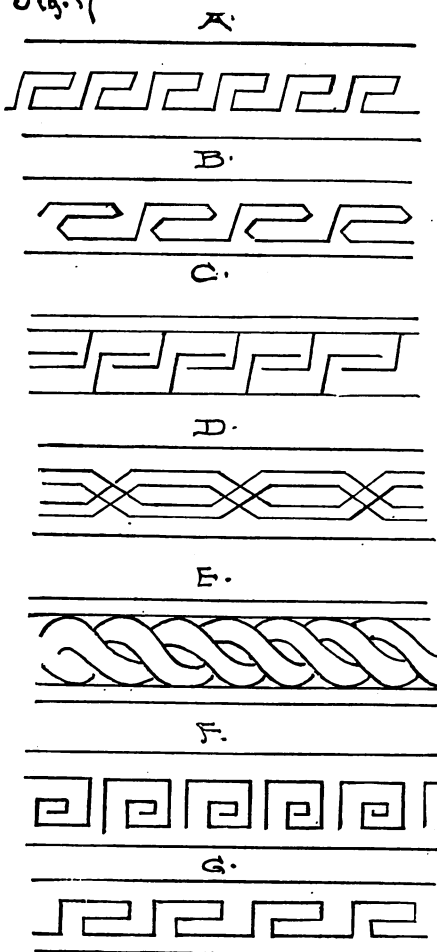
These frets, which are also known as "meanders," are a very ancient form of architectural ornament, and owe their origin to the city of Etruria, while the Greeks appear to have employed the "meander" almost as early as the Etruscans, whence it passed to the Romans and descended to our own times. At figure 17 I show a varied selection of frets from all countries, which will serve to show the student how wide has been the adoption of this description of ornament. Thus A is a Greek fret, B an Arabic framed on the preceding, C an Arabic form, D a modification known as Moresque, from its being found in Morocco and along the southern coasts of the Mediterranean, E is a Greek "meander," curvilinear in character and more generally denominated by the French term of "guilloche," F, G and H are Chinese forms of the fret, which it will be observed are imperfect when compared with the preceding examples; I and J are copied from Mexican pottery in the British Museum, while K is an example of a very singular fret from Yutacan. Although these ornaments look complex, the art of cutting

DESIGN FOR MANTEL MIRROR FRAME, BY HALL & GARRISON, PHILADELPHIA.



out and drawing them is not at all difficult. It is accomplished by the ruling of lines, unequal in number, and any desired distance, regular of course, apart, as shown at figure 18. These are then crossed by a number of vertical lines so as to leave the

Fig. 17



whole of the ground divided into equal square spaces. By taking certain of these spaces, and passing over or "skipping" others, no matter however a "incander" may be, it can be easily manipulated. Thus at A in figure 18, I have set out a single fret, and at B a double one, each being varied to show procedure.

This simple description will afford the carver admirable practice in the employment of the chisel, the gouge not being here at all necessary. The various patterns can easily be outlined by placing the edge of the chisel on the drawn pencil lines of the design, the block of wood having first been made fast, the tool being held at a slight inclination, as represented at A in figure 19, and then striking the handle with the mallet or hammer—the former for preference. The edge of the tool is then placed at a little distance from the cut thus made, but, of course, parallel with it, inclined in the oppo-

site direction, and another stroke made, when a small piece of wood will be removed, and a V-like channel left all round. According to the nature of the work, so consequently will different sized chisels be required. The intervening portion of the "ground" may then be cut away, for which purpose a gouge will be found the handiest, though a chisel can be employed. The outlines of the design must now be again gone over with a sharp chisel, held perpendicularly as illustrated at B in figure 19, this being necessary to make the edges vertical, as a design invariably looks much bolder, better and cleaner, and generally more perfect, when its boundary lines or edges form a true right angle with the ground surface than when they are inclined. Extreme care must, however, be taken against undercutting, as this does not look at all well. At figure 20 I have given a sketch, showing at A the portion outlined with the chisel with the V-shaped cuts, and at B the portion finished, the ground having been cut away, and the edges finished up square. Should it be wished to have the ground very nice and level, the bevel of the chisel must be next to the work, and in this care must be taken, or the tool will enter too far, split up the wood, and spoil the ground entirely. A very handy tool for this work is a short, but very sharp mortising chisel, which is in reality very analogous to the "scraper" of the wood engraver in its action. In cases of simple design it is advisable to "mat" or roughen the ground, as by this means the design is thrown up, and better effects as regards light and shade are obtained. Punches for this purpose can be obtained of any shape, but a handy man can make very good ones out of French nails, known as *Points de Paris*.

Although often included in wood carving, but in reality a distinct branch altogether of wood working is the cutting of frets, which

as its practice affords a means for the amateur to get his hand in, as it were, in the manipulation of tools, and as also the frets can be utilised for a variety of purposes, such as frames, I shall include a few remarks thereupon in this series, reminding my readers that when utilised as frames, the wood to receive them should be more or less bevelled, and there should be an external molding, and also an internal one, but individual taste will regulate this. The frets should be cut into lengths, then cut up and mitred nicely at the corners, and a rich effect given to both frame and picture by a gilt beading.

Fig. 18.

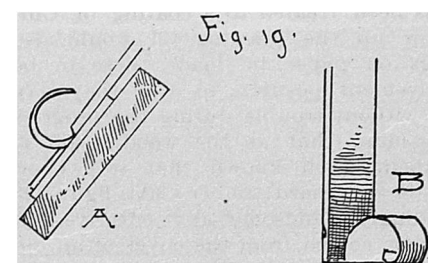
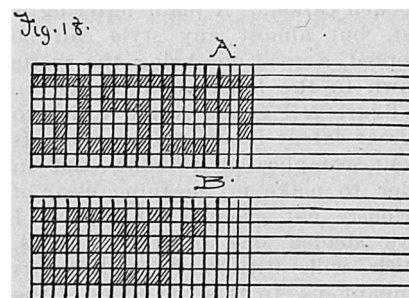


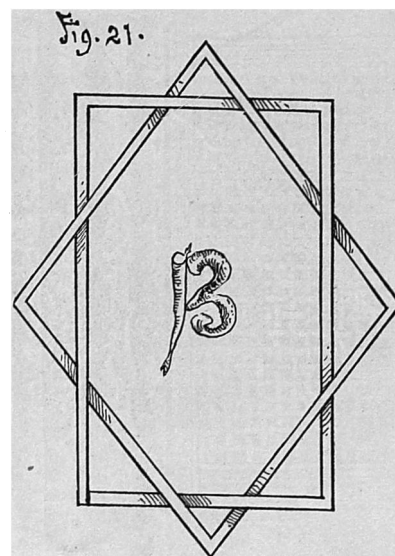
Fig. 20.



order, which in some cases can be adapted for fret as well as for carved work patterns. To give fret designs would be a waste of space; suffice that the beginner have a fair amount of practice with same before passing on to the following, which must all be executed in low relief, and which will form a fitting successor to the "meanders" previously treated.

The utilization of these strap work or interlaced ribbon patterns for the purposes of ornamental design is of very ancient origin, and can be traced back to the ancient Egyptians or Celts, but it was at the Renaissance that this species of ornamentation attained its full growth, being then universally utilized in carving, furniture and book binding, in this last being known as "Grolier," after the chancellor of that name, who had all his books ornamented with strap work designs. The designing of patterns of this description is very simple, there being but one rule to be observed therein—that no strap goes twice consecutively in the same way—that is to say, if it crosses over another strap at the first interlacement, it must at the next go under, and so on until the design is completed. This is seen at figure 21, composed of a diamond and cube interlaced, and in which simple design the rule just referred to is rigidly adhered to. Similar patterns to these may be designed in boundless variety, as any of the geometrical patterns can be utilised, and they will show up with greater effect if the ground is gone over with a "matting" punch. When these strap work patterns are at all complicated, they are apt, unless very great care is paid thereto, to appear indistinct, but by altering the relief somewhat, the difficulty is got over, while another relief is afforded by impressing the different straps of the design with distinguishing cuts or grounds, similar to those adopted by wood engravers. Thus a plane surface could be left, as in argent in heraldry, one covered with dots as for or, by vertical lines as in *gules*, by horizontal lines as in *azure*, as

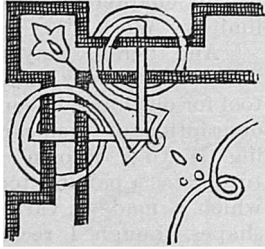
Fig. 21.



## THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

in pourpre by diagonal lines from right to left, as in vert from left to right diagonally, and sable by crossed lines, the dotted effect being obtained by a small point de Paris punch, and the other effects by means of a small V-shaped tool, such as wood engravers use. If this plan is adopted, it will be possible for the workman to distinguish each strap in his design, the distinguishing cuts being of course made extremely shallow, as if deep these distinguishing marks will be hopelessly mixed up with the pattern itself, an eventuality to be avoided. In open panels, such as shown at figure 21, an initial can be worked in in the centre, particularly if the panel is intended to form a portion of a present, such as an ornamental wooden casket. A plain lettering is

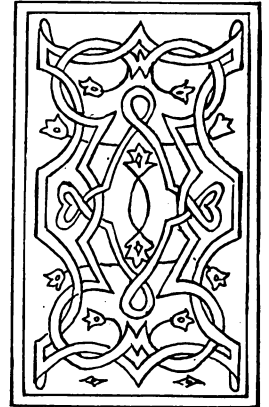
Fig. 22.



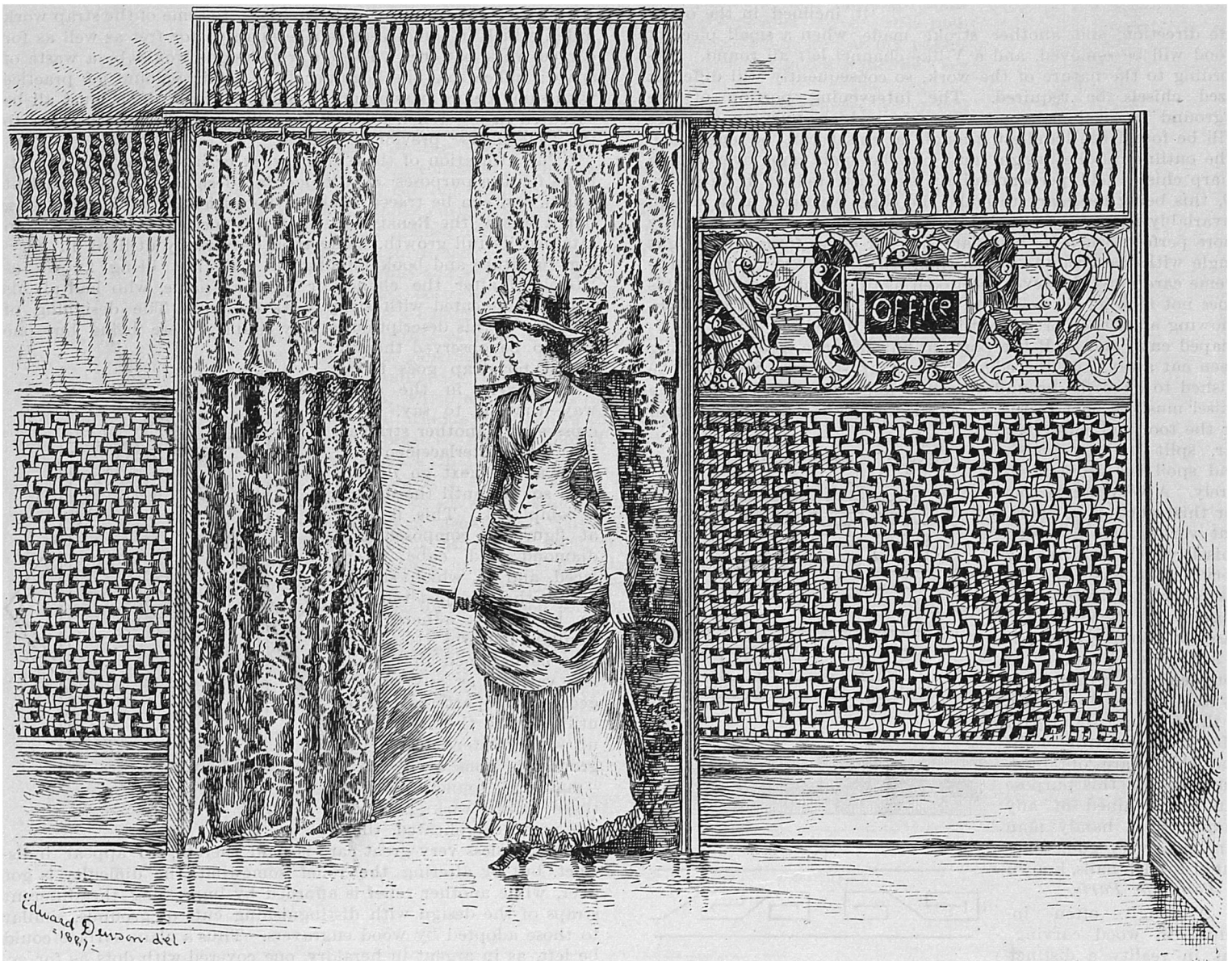
best, but almost any style can be adopted, a good one being the rustic shown in the illustration (figure 21). At figure 22 I give a corner which to a great extent illustrates my remarks about complicated ribbons, and in order to make my meaning clear of variously cut grounds or straps, I have shaded one of the ribbons, which will distinguish it from its companion. In this the edges of the design will require to be vertical and sharply and evenly cut, care being taken in the drawing of the design, which to ensure its being well seen, should be drawn after the level surface of the wood has been treated to a coating of Chinese white, which will throw up the drawing. I would also advise that separate drawings on paper be made, these to be hung on the wall in a convenient position, so that they may be consulted frequently and without trouble during the progress of the work. Also bear in mind that as the wood is soft so must the tools be sharp, it being well known that soft wood requires sharper tools to cut it than hard timber. At figure 23 I have illustrated an exceedingly handsome and effective, yet very complex strap work design, copied from the cover of an old French book. In this the oval formed by the curvings of the ribbons in the centre is effective, and the scroll corners are in likewise very good taste. The wood carver can by a little ingenuity convert this pattern into a very pretty frame for a pic-

ture, enlarging the central oval and reducing the surrounding strap work to a thin arrangement. In cutting this out, do the large or bold portions first, proceeding gradually to the small ones, which should be cut last, as by this means the gradual effect can be judged, and little details attended to which cannot be done when the small work is accomplished at the beginning. The whole of the design will be in *bas relievé*, and in this the ground looks best when left quite smooth and plain, the edges of the scroll being at true right angles. A variety of "running" strap work designs can be made by the worker himself from the frets already treated of, and by careful duplication some very pleasing effects will be produced, a pursuit of which, with the examples cited, will give my readers abundant work till my next chapter appears, in which I shall treat of the cutting and carving of simple moldings.

Fig. 23.



MANY houses give special attention to sets of various sorts for presentative occasions. Punch bowls, ice cream sets, fish or game sets, meat sets, and the like are shown in most elegant and comprehensive assortment. In fine decorated glass there are lemonade sets, punch bowl and glasses, or cups, and many other equally interesting and available articles. There are new varieties of glass that will bear a high degree of heat. Small chocolate cups are made from it, and then, with a handsome chocolate pot in fine china, are exceptionally pretty. Finger bowls are shown in an almost endless variety of styles and shapes. There are some beautiful specimens of art work in double glass, the outside being ruby or blue, the inside lemon or shell pink. A variety of choice designs in raised work may be seen in this fine ware. Jewelled glass is charming, and in those styles where the jewels are set in sprays of fine flowers and foliage the effect is highly artistic.



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